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CHICAGO FIRE

DRAW

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CJ Sapong Scores in the 95th Minute, Fire Draws Orlando City SC 1-1 at SeatGeek Stadium

The Chicago Fire Soccer Club scored on the last play of the game to earn a thrilling 1-1 comeback draw against Orlando City SC at SeatGeek Stadium on Saturday afternoon. Fire forward CJ Sapong, who played most of the match on the wing, scored the equalizer in the 95th minute, tallying his second goal in as many games in his home debut with the Fire. Speedy midfielder Przemyslaw Frankowski, who shined in his debut last week versus LA Galaxy, came into the game in the 68th minute and notched his first assist of the season.

With the 1-1 result, the Fire, which dominated possession 59-41 percent, are unbeaten in its last four league games played against Orlando City, including three wins and one draw.

Attacking Orlando City early in the match, the Fire (0-1-1, 1pt) created two strong chances to score in the first 20 minutes of play. In the second minute, the Fire came close to scoring an early goal when a dangerous cross into the six-yard box from Djordje Mihailovic almost found forward Nemanja Nikolic, who got tangled up with Orlando defender Kamal Miller (WATCH). Continuing to press forward, the Fire created a similar sequence in the 20th minute when midfielder Aleksandar Katai, after a well-executed stop-start move, played a threatening ball into the box for Nikolic, who narrowly missed the target with a first-time effort from the edge of the six-yard box.

Orlando City's (0-1-1, 1pt) lone chance in the first half occurred in the 39th minute when forward Dom Dwyer hit a volley from outside the box. Reacting quickly, Fire goalkeeper David Ousted made a comfortable diving save to keep the score level heading into halftime.

Despite outshooting the Lions 4-1 and winning the possession battle (57-43) in the first half, the Fire fell behind two minutes into the second half when a miscommunication in the defense allowed Dwyer to score an opportunistic goal from just inside the 18-yard box.



In the 64th minute of play, the Fire were reduced to 10 men when defender Jorge Corrales was shown a straight red card for bringing down midfielder Ruan just outside the box.

Despite Head Coach Veljko Paunovic being forced into reshuffling his team to cope for the loss of Corrales, the Men in Red continued to push forward for a late equalizer in the second half. In the 76th minute, Frankowski played a precise cross to the far post for Katai, who was unable to convert from close range after a strong challenge from Ruan.

Paunovic's changes paid off in the final minute of the match, when substitutes Nicolas Hasler and Frankowski combined for Frankowski to play a dangerous lofted cross into the 18-yard box from wide right. Out-jumping his defender, Sapong, who had moved to center forward when Nikolic had been withdrawn in the 68th minute, rose into the air and connected with Frankowski's cross. His strong header evaded goalkeeper Brian Rowe to find the corner of the net, with seconds to play.

Next up, the Fire will host Seattle Sounders FC at SeatGeek Stadium on Saturday, March 16. Beginning at 12:00 p.m. CT, the match against Sounders FC will be broadcast live on ESPN+ and transmitted locally on Univision Radio WRTO AM 1200.

Match notes:

Saturday's match marked the Fire's first home match of the 2019 MLS regular season.

Chicago outshot Orlando 7-2.

Three players made their first home start for the Fire in Saturday's match, including goalkeeper David Ousted, defender Marcelo and midfielder/forward CJ Sapong.

Sapong tallied his second goal of the season and his first goal at SeatGeek Stadium as a member of the Fire.

Chicago Fire continued...

Midfielder Przemyslaw Frankowski and forward Fabian Herbers each made their home debuts for the Fire, with both players entering the match in the second half.

Frankowski recorded his first career assist in MLS regular season action.

Saturday's 1-1 result extended the Fire's unbeaten streak against Orlando City to four games in league play, including three wins and one draw.

Box Score:

Chicago Fire 1:1 Orlando City SC

Scoring Summary:

ORL - Dwyer (1) 47'

CHI - Sapong (2) (Frankowski) 90'+5'

Misconduct Summary:

ORL - Smith (Caution) 34'

CHI - Mihailovic (Caution) 45'

CHI - Corrales (Ejection), 64'

CHI - Schweinsteiger (Caution) 90'

Chicago Fire: Ousted; Campos (Herbers 80'), Marcelo, Kappelhof, Corrales; McCarty ©, Schweinsteiger, Sapong, Mihailovic (Hasler 69'), Katai; Nikolic (Frankowski 68')

Subs not used: Sanchez, Lillard, Martinez, Bronico

Shots: 7 Shots on goal: 3 Fouls Committed: 16 Fouls Suffered: 11 Offsides: 3 Corners: 1

Orlando City SC: Rowe; O'Neill, De John, Miller; Smith (Ruan 57'), Mendez, Johnson, Acosta; Klejstan, Akindele (Dwyer 21'), Nani © (Mueller 89')

Subs not used: Ratjitsingh, Ascues, Rosell, Colman

Shots: 2 Shots on goal: 2 Fouls Committed: 11 Fouls Suffered: 16 Offsides: 4 Corners: 2

Referee: Robert Sibiga

Assistant Referees: Jason White, Apolinar Mariscal

VAR: Ramy Touchan

Chicago Fire: Ousted; Campos (Herbers 80'), Marcelo, Kappelhof, Corrales; McCarty ©, Schweinsteiger, Sapong, Mihailovic (Hasler 69'), Katai; Nikolic (Frankowski 68')

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CREDIT: CHICAGO FIRE SOCCER CLUB

Los Angeles Football Club 4, Portland Timbers 1

Carlos Vela hand a hand in his side's first three goals before scoring the fourth himself as LAFC cruised to a 4-1 victory over the Portland Timbers on Sunday evening at Banc of California Stadium.

Mark-Anthony Kaye, Christian Ramirez and Adama Diomande also scored for LAFC, who have opened their season with home victories over both clubs that reached last year's Western Conference Championship.

Defender Steven Beitashour exited with an apparent injury after 30 minutes for the hosts, and Kaye may also have picked up a knock that forced his 70th-minute departure.

Jeremy Ebobisse contributed his first goal of the season for Portland, who are now two games into a league-record 12 matches on the road to begin the 2019 campaign before returning to an expanded and renovated Providence Park.

Timbers midfielder Diego Chara picked up his second caution late in the match, and was sent off for the first time since May 20 of 2017. It was his first-ever ejection via a second yellow card in 234 MLS appearances.

Goals

14' - LAFC - Mark-Anthony Kaye | WATCH

29' - POR - Jeremy Ebobisse | WATCH

45' - LAFC - Christian Ramirez | WATCH

65' - LAFC - Adama Diomande | WATCH

68' - LAFC - Carlos Vela | WATCH

Three Things

THE BIG PICTURE: Despite their impressive results to open the season, its worth remembering the kind of glittering victories LAFC also posted at times last season. En route to finishing third in the Western Conference table last season, LAFC scored three goals or more in eight of their 16 victories, and four more in seven of those wins. As for Portland, they also earned only two points in a five-match start on the road in 2018, but then assembled a 15-match unbeaten run that began with their home opener.



MOMENT OF THE MATCH: After fueling LAFC's first three goals, Vela saved the best for last with this expert finish for his first goal of 2019, after posting 14 in his club's expansion 2018 season. Not to be overshadowed, Diomande deserves credit for a quality assist during the buildup.

MAN OF THE MATCH: Vela was outstanding almost from the opening kick, and offered the kind of multi-faceted production that has become more common in his game of late. In the past 10 league matches dating back to last season, has contributed multiple goals-plus assists four times.

CREDIT: MLS SOCCER Ian Quillen Contributor



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FC Cincinnati celebrate taking their first-ever MLS point in Atlanta

Expansion side FC Cincinnati took their first MLS point in one of the most memorable ways possible, on the road against the reigning MLS Cup champions.

Yet Cincinnati manager Alan Koch may have discovered the most important elements of his club's makeup before Roland Lamah's 86th-minute equalizer.

Koch's men found themselves down a goal inside five minutes after kickoff when Julian Gressel set up Josef Martinez's opener. It was Cincy's resolute response to that moment that left their coach most impressed.

"I don't think it fazed us at all," Koch said after the match. "Obviously it's very, very difficult to go on the road and play in a place like this and concede that early. Some teams will collapse, but give the guys credit tonight — they didn't collapse at all. We just stayed calm. We managed the process of getting through the game. We did what good teams know how to do and grabbed a goal at the end of the game."

That's not to discount the history FCC made in this, their second MLS match.

Coming off the back of an ugly result in MLS' opening weekend on the road against the Seattle Sounders, MLS's new boys held firm against 11 talented players wearing red and black stripes — and the more than 70,000 in attendance cheering them on.

"[The players] should be rewarded tonight," Koch said. "They put in a very very good collective performance, and to get a point here on the road is a huge milestone for us as a club."

If anyone knows the difficulty of earning a result here, it's former Atlanta and current Cincinnati defender Greg Garza, a key cog in Atlanta's championship team last season. He had barely settled onto the bench by the goal, but was still able to enter into a competitive match when he replaced Alvas Powell with 19 minutes remaining.

"I didn't even see the goal. I think I was still waving to some fans. I thought the game was about to end 5-0 or 6-0," Garza joked. "So I'm glad we were able to change it around. We got some more energy involved as the game went on. We started to grow some confidence, and I really think we could've changed the game if we had more time."

On the back of a positive result, FC Cincinnati will play its first home league match next weekend against the Portland Timbers (5 pm ET | FS1, MLS LIVE on DAZN), the other 2018 MLS Cup finalist.

Koch hopes his team can earn all three points in front of their home supporters, but either way he's confident they're on the right track.

"We know it's going to take time, but that growth was unfolding in front of our own eyes as the game went on," he said. "I think getting the point at the end is huge for the players' confidence. They'll feel a lot better about themselves and the work they put in."

CREDIT: MLS SOCCER Joe Patrick Contributor



Sporting Kansas City 2, Philadelphia Union 0

In a game that mostly came down to penalty kicks, Sporting Kansas City proved more efficient from the spot.

Playing their 2019 MLS home opener, in between a pair of Concacaf Champions League matches, SKC rode an Ilie Sanchez PK goal and a Tim Melia PK save to a 2-0 victory over the 10-man Philadelphia Union on Sunday.

The opening goal came in the 11th minute when Auston Trusty was whistled for pushing Krisztian Nemeth in the back — after Ray Gaddis thwarted an SKC break — and Sanchez converted the ensuing penalty kick for the second time in five days.

Marco Fabian couldn't do the same in the 41st minute, as Melia stopped the Mexican international's attempt after a video review led to Seth Sinovic being called for a handball in the box.

Melia made a couple of more nice saves to preserve the shutout and Fabian's day got worse when he was sent off with a 60th-minute red card for stomping Johnny Russell — also after a video review.

SKC's win was sealed on a Jack Elliott own goal in the 80th minute, with the Union center back accidentally redirecting a Gerso cross into the back of the net.

Goals

11' — SKC — Ilie Sanchez (PK)

80' — SKC — Jack Elliott (OG)

Three Things

THE BIG PICTURE: After consecutive 2-1 losses — in their MLS opener and in the first leg of the CCL quarterfinals — SKC got a much-needed boost at home during a busy and important stretch. For the Union, there's no shame in losing in Kansas City, but a missed penalty kick, an own goal and a red card is a rough way for it to happen, especially going into an even more daunting matchup next week in Atlanta.



MOMENT OF THE MATCH: Melia continued to show his PK mastery with his stop of Fabian, preventing the Union from going into halftime with the game tied.

MAN OF THE MATCH: In addition to his PK save, Melia also saved a rocket and a header from Cory Burke in the second half en route to his 40th career shutout.

FC Dallas 2, LA Galaxy 0

Reto Ziegler scored from the penalty spot and Bryan Acosta opened his MLS account with a golazo to help lift FC Dallas to a 2-0 win over the LA Galaxy at Toyota Stadium Saturday afternoon.

Ziegler broke the scoreless tie in the 53rd minute, converting a penalty kick earned when LA Galaxy defender Diego Polenta connected with Matt Hedges on a high kick in the box.

Acosta doubled FC Dallas' lead in the 61st minute, latching onto a ball cut back to just outside the 18-yard box by Paxton Pomykal and hammering a first-time shot past David Bingham.

The Galaxy, who played without an injured Zlatan Ibrahimovic, were again punished for stunning defensive mistakes and were fortunate not to concede at least two more goals in the first half.

Goals

53' — DAL — Reto Ziegler (PK)

61' — DAL — Bryan Acosta

Three Things

THE BIG PICTURE: Luchi Gonzalez earned his first win as FC Dallas head coach and it was a big one against a longtime Western Conference foe. He enjoyed the second-half goals, especially the screamer by Acosta, but surely there's concern over an injury scare to Reggie Cannon that forced off the fullback at halftime. Meanwhile, the Galaxy continue to be plagued by defensive mistakes, which Dallas turned into two goals.

MOMENT OF THE MATCH: Acosta's first MLS goal was a thing of

beauty, crushed with the outside of his right foot first time after a Pomykal cut back. We can't watch this enough.

MAN OF THE MATCH: Filling in for an injured Jacori Hayes, Pomykal didn't just set up Acosta's stunning strike, but he also won all 10 of his duels on the day. Carlos Gruezo deserves some shouts too.



Seattle Sounders FC 2, Colorado Rapids 0

Two goals within the first eight minutes of the match, courtesy of Kelvin Leerdam and Raul Ruidiaz, propelled the Seattle Sounders to a comfortable 2-0 home win over the Colorado Rapids at CenturyLink Field on Saturday night.

It didn't take long for the Sounders to get on the board — in the fifth minute, Leerdam was the beneficiary of a ball played back to him following a snuffed-out Ruidiaz attempt, scoring for the second time in two matches. Then, less than three minutes later, Ruidiaz and Victor Rodriguez played a neat give-and-go through the Rapids defense, with the Peruvian scoring his second goal of the season to put the Sounders up 2-0.

The Rapids had their chances after that — indeed, finishing the half with a 8-7 shot advantage — but couldn't get on the board throughout the match. Kei Kamara came closest with some attempts that kept Sounders keeper Stefan Frei occupied. Additionally, Kellyn Acosta sailed a shot just over the bar as one of his last actions of the match, giving way to Andre Shinyashiki in the final 15 minutes, as Rapids coach Anthony Hudson sought to bring in additional offense that didn't quite materialize.

Goals

5' – SEA – Kelvin Leerdam

8' – SEA – Raul Ruidiaz



Three Things

THE BIG PICTURE: For the Sounders, it's a second straight home win, they have a +5 goal differential, and they're in fantastic shape heading to Chicago next week for the first of two straight road matches. The Rapids, who may have not completely thawed from last week's home draw in extremely cold conditions, continue a grueling March pitting them against five potential Western playoff entrants. After next week's nationally-televvised match against Sporting Kansas City, they do a Texas two-step, on the road against FC Dallas and back at home against Houston.

MOMENT OF THE MATCH: The Ruidiaz goal was the culmination of a great offensive moment, and coming so closely on the heels of the first goal, it seemed like an onslaught of goals were coming. While Colorado deserve credit for keeping it to just two, Seattle deserve a little more credit for getting out to the hot start.

MAN OF THE MATCH: While Leerdam likely won't stay on his goal-a-game pace, Ruidiaz most certainly could, and he threatened to get ahead of that against the Rapids by staying focused and goal-minded all night.

CREDIT: MLS SOCCER Phil West Contributor

Houston Dynamo 2, Montreal Impact 1

Mauro Manotas scored in the 86th minute to stretch his league goals run to five matches and lift the Houston Dynamo to a 2-1 victory over the Montreal Impact on Saturday at BBVA Compass Stadium.

Memo Rodriguez also scored on a ferocious strike from distance before halftime for Houston, which rested several of their regular starters ahead of the second leg of their Concacaf Champions League quarterfinal at Tigres UANL on Tuesday.

Coach Wilmer Cabrera brought on Alberth Elis and Romell Quioto after halftime, with Quioto providing the service for Manotas' first-time winner. That sealed Houston's maiden victory of the 2019 season after opening with a home draw against Real Salt Lake.

Saphir Taider scored for the second straight game to put Montreal in front early, but the Impact failed to register another shot on target. And after coming from a goal down in their season-opening victory at San Jose, coach Remi Garde's Impact suffered a reverse fate here.

Goals

34' - MTL - Saphir Taider
36' - HOU - Memo Rodriguez
86' - HOU - Mauro Manotas

Three Things

THE BIG PICTURE: After ending 2018 on a tear, Manotas' continued good form in 2019 suggests the Colombian just may be good for a run at the Golden Boot presented by Audi. He now has 13 goals in his last 14 matches in all competitions, and four so far in five in 2019. Oh yeah, and he's now reached a Dynamo milestone.

MOMENT OF THE MATCH: Taider's side-footed volley to open the scoring was an exceptional finish. But it felt like a distant memory only two minutes later when Rodriguez unleashed this rocket to level affairs.

MAN OF THE MATCH: Aside from Taider's strike, the Impact offered precious little in attack. Some of that owed to the MLS debut of Dynamo center back Aljaz Struna, who in his first 90 minutes of work appeared plenty capable of giving Houston the stability they need in their back four.





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